

Understanding Generational Diversity:  
Bridging the Gap Between Generations Within the Merced Fire Department

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September 2012

### Certification Statement

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

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### Abstract

This applied research project was completed to identify characteristics of generational diversity and the differences between generations within the Merced Fire Department (MFD). The problem was the MFD had not addressed the challenges associated with the differences in values and work ethic amongst the department's generations, resulting in miscommunication and diminished cooperation. The purpose of this research project was to identify the values, work ethic, and differences of each generation within the MFD that may contribute to the disconnect occurring among coworkers. The author used the descriptive research methodology to answer the following questions: (a) what is the composition of generations in the MFD workforce? (b) What are the values and work ethic differences of generations in the MFD workforce? (c) How do the different generations within the MFD view each other in regards to values and work ethic? (d) What challenges are seen by each generation within the MFD in gaining acceptance with others? The author conducted a literature review to determine characteristics of generational diversity. An on-line survey was developed to identify generational characteristics of MFD members. The same survey was distributed nationally to gauge other departments in relation to the topic. Focused personnel questionnaires were also used to gather detailed responses from each generation of MFD members. Results showed that there were three generations working within the MFD. The responses from members did correlate to generational characteristics identified within the literature review. Additionally, it was determined that there was tension and lack of knowledge about what influenced each generation causing conflict. To reduce the issues related with generational diversity it was recommended that all members be educated on the topic, 360 degree evaluations be utilized for all members, and on-going training for new members and updates for current members as more information is gathered on the subject.

## Table of Contents

Certification Statement.....	2
Abstract .....	3
Table of Contents .....	4
Introduction .....	5
Background and Significance .....	6
Literature Review.....	9
Procedures .....	18
Results .....	21
Discussion.....	28
Recommendations .....	36
References .....	39
Appendix A: Fire service generational survey .....	41
Appendix B: MFD generational survey results .....	49
Appendix C: National generational survey results .....	59
Appendix D: MFD generational questionnaire.....	70
Appendix E: MFD generational questionnaire results summary.....	72

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Merced Fire Department

Generational diversity has become one of the most significant issues facing the United States workforce over the past decade. According to an article published in FDU Magazine Online this is the first time in American history that the labor force has four different generations working together (Hammill, 2005). It is understandable that with so many different generations and the individual characteristics that come with each, managing today's work force can be challenging. As emphasized in *Managing the Multi-generational Workforce: From the GI Generation to the Millennials* "Today's managers are forced to find a way in which they can effectively connect with employees from each generational cohort and connect the members of these cohorts to one another" (Delcampo, Haggerty, Haney, & Knippel, 2011, p. 73). Unfortunately, making this connection has proven difficult for most as Twenge (2006) reports that 60% of surveyed workplaces are experiencing tension between its generations.

This issue is not foreign to the fire service. Although fire departments across the nation may not have all four generations working due to a younger retirement age than non-safety employees, the issues are still present. The glaring difference is that a good deal of research has been conducted in the private/public traditional work force while very little has been done in the fire service. This lack of understanding of generational diversity within the fire service has invariably created concern for management as weakened cohesiveness hampers operations and service to the community.

The problem is the Merced Fire Department has not addressed the challenges associated with the differences in values and work ethic amongst the department's generations, resulting in miscommunication and diminished cooperation. The purpose of this research project is to

identify the values, work ethic, and differences of each generation within the Merced Fire Department that may contribute to the disconnect occurring among coworkers. This research is very important, as improving communications and understanding will help bridge the gap between the generations.

The author used the descriptive research methodology to answer the following questions:

- (a) what is the composition of generations in Merced Fire Department's workforce? (b) What are the values and work ethic differences of generations in the Merced Fire Department workforce?
- (c) How do the different generations within the Merced Fire Department view each other in regards to values and work ethic? (d) What challenges are seen by each generation within the Merced Fire Department in gaining acceptance with others?

#### Background and Significance

The Merced Fire Department (MFD) is situated on the Highway 99 corridor in California's Central Valley. The local economy is primarily supported by extensive agriculture, manufacturing, and tourism. The MFD is an all career fire department that provides fire suppression, basic life support, technical rescue, hazardous materials response, fire prevention and life safety education along with other services deemed essential. These services are delivered by one fire chief, one deputy chief, three battalion chiefs, 18 captains, 18 engineers, 20 firefighters, one fire inspector, and two administrative support staff. Personnel work out of five fire stations staffing five engines, one truck company, and one fire administration building.

Significant changes have occurred over the past six years that impacted the organization. In a discussion with MFD Fire Chief Mike McLaughlin (personal communication, August 8, 2012) it was stated that the department's staffing had quickly increased and then subsequently decreased in a short period of time. In 2006 two occurrences came together to allow the MFD to

increase its staffing by 21 personnel. The first was the passing of a ½ cent public safety sales tax. The second, an award from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Staffing for Adequate Fire & Emergency Response Grant (SAFER). The influx of personnel started to bring the newest generation, the millennials, into the MFD which to this point was heavily represented by the Baby-Boomers and Generation X. Along with the blending of three different and distinct generations came three different sets of values and work ethics and the communication challenge.

The second component of the significant change, and more distinctly what has edged the MFD to the present issue of lack of understanding between generations, is the sudden loss of senior employees. This was a result of the financial downturn in the economy that left many communities struggling to provide services. Through early retirement buy-outs, attrition, frozen positions and lay-offs the department experienced a sudden void created primarily by its most senior individuals. The MFD still has a balance of the three generations, values, and work ethics; however, a good deal of the knowledge on how to blend these characteristics into a cohesive work force is absent.

The present situation can be conveyed to comments made in the fire house that fire personnel across the nation would probably attest to hearing at one point or another during their career. Older fire service members have been known to make statements, such as: "these young kids have no work ethic" or "they need to put down their gadgets and listen" or "they show no respect". Conversely, the younger generation has been heard proclaiming that the older generation is "out of touch" or "are still living in the old days" or "they couldn't turn on an iPad let alone use it". All the while you have the middle generation making the similar about the younger and older personnel. It is common practice that when a person does not understand

something they define it in their own perspective whether accurate or not and the lack of understanding in regards to generational diversity plays into these perceptions of others.

Without addressing an issue, such as lack of generational understanding that impacts communication, the future will most likely entail more disagreements, misunderstandings, and lack of cooperation in the workforce. The fire service and the MFD particularly, is founded on the tenants of teamwork and clear concise communication. Whether it is on the fire ground or in the station these tenants are paramount in achieving the goals of a safe and well served community. Conducting research in the area of generational diversity and the challenges it presents is the first step to educating members to the different characteristics of each generation and more importantly why each is different and how to address those differences. Increasing the awareness of differing value sets and work ethic and how each is influenced by the era an individual grew up in will help provide the knowledge needed for effective communication to achieve the goal of bridging the generational gap.

One component of the Executive Development course at the National Fire Academy's (NFA) Executive Fire Officer Program is to identify organizational culture and lead change. This is outlined in unit 7: *Organizational culture and change*, with the objectives of not only identifying cultural characteristics but to also recognize that diversity, including generational, is a significant component in culture and an indicator that cultural change may be needed (NFA, 2011). This research also relates to the United States Fire Administrations (USFA) strategic plan operational goal to "improve the fire and emergency services' professional status" (USFA, 2010). Developing effective communication and a better understanding between each generation assuredly would move the fire and emergency services' closer to this goal.



### Literature Review

A literature review was conducted utilizing books, periodicals, articles, and on-line resources to identify works completed in relation to the questions core information being asked of this research. While conducting the review it was noted that very little research has been accomplished within the fire service as compared to the collective work force. As such, the focus of the literature review was on the major elements of the research questions. The review focused on identifying and defining the generations in the United States work force, generations' value and work ethic differences, how do the different generations view each other and what challenges do the generations and employers face in overcoming these differences.

In attempting to identify and define the generations comprising today's work force it was noted that there are varying views of what defines a generation. Previous researchers and authors had differing views on what year range of birth defines a generation; although most were within a few years of each other. Additionally, finding a common use of title for each generation proved challenging. For this applied research project this researcher applied the blend of the most common utilized titles and birth ranges. The four generations in the work force are: the Veterans born between 1922-1945, the Baby Boomers 1946-1964, Generation X 1965-1980 and the Millennials 1981-2000 (Hammill, 2005; Mayhew, 2011).

The primary importance for identifying each generation by a date of birth range was that it had been found that people were highly influenced by the era in which they grew up in. Cekada (2012) described "each generation has unique characteristics, influences, work ethics, core values, and respect and tolerance for others that affect how its members interact, communicate and learn in the workplace" (p. 40). These unique characteristics were formed from the current socio-economic, family, political, media, educational and world events occurring

around them while growing up. Each generation's characteristics then followed them into the work force where differing values, beliefs and work ethic often clash (Hammill, 2005).

Therefore, close looks at these outside influences have helped define the different generations.

The Veterans born between 1922 and 1945 were highly influenced by world wars and sacrifice as a nation. They either remembered the end of or at least were raised by parents who persevered through the great depression and instilled the base of want versus need lifestyle. They were frugal individuals who learned early that by working together with common goals, as a family or a nation; they could accomplish anything ("When generations collide," 2002, para. 9). Although one would not expect 67 year old plus members of this generation to still be active in the work force but the current economy has delayed or temporarily ended retirement for these individuals.

Born between 1946 and 1964 the Baby Boomers have established most of the rules and procedures over the past two decades that businesses use today and had been expected that this generation would secure the upper positions of organizations until at least 2015 (Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000). The Baby Boomers title came from the great spike in births after World War II. They were characterized by a thriving economy and strong family support. They were highly influenced by the civil rights movement and the beginning of the Vietnam War. The country's antigovernment movement was born of this era. Although this generation was raised with strong family support they also held the highest divorce rate and second marriages as adults (<http://www.wmfc.org/GenerationalDifferencesChart.pdf>). With these members holding the highest positions in the US labor market it would be vital for them to have a solid understanding of the other generations characteristics to be able to connect with them and connect them to each other.

One of the most significant influences of Generation X, born 1965 to 1980, is the economic downturn of the late 70's and early 80's. They were characterized by a two income family with both dad and mom working full time jobs. This in turn gave this generation the unofficial nickname of the "latch key kids". Members of this era had to become self-sufficient early on as they often came home to an empty house after school, hence the nickname. This self-sufficient trait was carried over into the work force as adults and is seen as independence (Mayhew, 2011). They are also seen as skeptics as the downturn in the economy had many major American institutions being called into question along with an explosion of media outlets and coverage to report it ("When generations collide," 2002). Generation X was also the first generation to be introduced to the emerging technology of the computer in the mainstream labor market.

The last, but the most influential generations to have flooded the current work force is the Millennials, born from 1981 to 2000. This generation was known for being raised by "helicopter" parents who hovered over them and preached that they can achieve anything they set their minds too. The Millennials embraced diversity and were optimistic about their future. They thrived on technology to the point where it had become part of them both at work and home. The Millennials were always connected. This generation expected to have a say at work regardless of the amount of time they have been employed there and demand flexible work schedules. They felt if their work gets done why it matters what hours they work to accomplish it (Cekada, 2012). Zemke, Raines, and Filipczak (2000) have identified that not only will this generation make up about one-third of the US labor market but that they will most likely influence the twenty-first century greater than the Baby Boomers influenced the twentieth

century. The Pew Research Center described one of the most influential characteristics to define this generation and the future of the work force:

Millennials are on course to become the most educated generation in American History, a trend driven largely by the demands of a modern knowledge-based economy, but most likely accelerate in recent years by the millions of 20-somethings enrolling in graduate schools, colleges or community colleges in part because they can't find a job. ("The Millennials," 2010, para. 9)

The combination of the largest numbers and highest educated entering the work force should be a remarkable dynamic yet it may take some time to see how this would impact the generational diversity challenge.

The next question to explore through the literature review was the contrasting generations' value and work ethic differences. As noted the era an individual grew up in directly influenced their values and work ethic. This subsequently carried over into their work life which created the blending of these different characteristics and the challenge of having them coexists in the work place. Zemke et al. (2012) summarized the challenge presented:

People of different perspectives always have the potential to bring different thoughts and ideas to problem solving and future opportunity. An unfortunate outcome, one that mitigates against positive creative synergy, is intergenerational conflict: differences in values and views, and ways of working, talking, and thinking that set people in opposition to one another and challenge organizational best interests. (p. 11)

Quite often the complications people had with others in the workplace stemmed from these differences in values and work ethics or more importantly the ability to express and communicate these differences with each other (Martin & Tulgan, 2002).

The Veterans, heavily influenced by war, were well known for their loyalty to country and a defined respect for authority. They believed in discipline and conformity in life and work and had a matter-of-fact do what you are told mentality (Hammill, 2005). Furthermore, they believed in duty before pleasure and rarely questioned authority which is making the new workforce a strange and unfamiliar place for them. This cohort believed in government, was very patriotic due to their sacrifices early in life, and felt hard work is the key to a good life. The work ethic displayed by this group often entailed a company first attitude and that paying your dues was part of the process, which in turn supported their age equals seniority stance (<http://www.wmfc.org/GenerationalDifferencesChart.pdf>).

The Baby Boomers were taught early in life to be optimistic about their situation, value their personal growth opportunities and seize them and be involved in their work and community to realize their full potential. They were highly concerned about their health and wellness in both their work settings and at home. The Boomers worked efficiently and were team-oriented (Delcampo et al., 2011). This generation was known for being hard workers who established the 60 hour work week; however, they questioned authority and were often argumentative which does not bode well when having Veterans as bosses. An additional straying from the previous generation was the overall dislike of conformity and rules (Cekada, 2012). Mayhew (2011) also noted that this generation believed in working their way up the ladder to achieve success and was less likely to change employers compared to the younger cohorts. The Baby Boomers and Veterans, while not knowing it at the time, were the first illustration of generational conflict in the workplace.

The next cohort, Generation X, was characterized as self-reliant and independent. This was attributed to them being the least protected and supervised children of all the generations

(Delcampo et al., 2011). Their parents experienced a high divorce rate and this group also lived within the two working parent household often being alone after school to take care of themselves. Generation X was the first group to want to seek balance between their work and home life, not hold to the 60 hour work week mentality and cared less about advancement at the sacrifice of their work/life balance. They sought fun and diverse meaningful work and thrive on responsibility with creative input and challenging assignments (Mayhew, 2011). This group is also known to move on from a company if they do not find the type of work environment they are seeking.

Contrary to the Xer's need to develop self-reliance due to single at home or dual working parents, the Millennials were known as the over confident "I can do anything group". This was attributed to their parents wanting to make up for their lack of supervision as children. These parents have been coined as the "helicopter parents" because they were always hovering around their children cheering them on. Twenge (2006) described how this upbringing translates into the workplace; "Some young people will arrive with a feeling of entitlement, believing they deserve everything right away. This generation has shockingly high expectations for salary, job flexibility and duties" (p. 216). Mayhew (2011) further describes that the Millennials expected their opinions to be heard and were not shy about presenting them. Moreover, they did not expect to pay their dues as compared to other generations in achieving advancement. Interestingly enough this was the only generation that does not cite work ethic as one of its primary attributes ("The Millennials," 2010).

The Millennials wanted fun and exciting work places where they can express themselves and be heard. This group was the most educated generation today and felt that education should trump age or time with the company when determining seniority and advancement. They demand

flexible work schedules and felt that it should not matter when the work is done as long as it got done. The Millennials hated micromanagement and did not want to sacrifice their family or personal interests for their careers. This generation had demonstrated that they will take their talents elsewhere if they did not feel that the current workplace was meeting their needs. As Martin and Tulgan (2002) summarized; the Millennials “are poised to be the most demanding generation in history” (p. 35).

With the values and work ethic differences explored through the literature review the next area to gather information on what other researchers have found is how the generations view each other in regards to the aforementioned characteristics. It has been identified that the timeframe a person was raised in directly impacted their values, beliefs and work ethics. Knowing that there were differences and that often these differences created conflict in the workplace it was important to determine how each generation views each other.

No matter what generation a worker was raised in, or which they associated with the most, at some time or another they would have a disagreement at work that would essentially equate to generational misunderstanding (Martin & Tulgan, 2002). To further illustrate the disconnect between generations it was worth noting a Pew Research (2010) Gallup survey administered in 1969, an era with political turmoil and turbulence, which found that 74% of the general public felt there was a palpable generational gap. The same survey was conducted in 2010; an era when financial crisis was impacting all but little social or political tension was dominating society as in the 60's, and 79% of the general public felt that the generation gap was existent.

The research was consistent in that Generation X and the Millennials were the most likely to have had issues in the workplace. In essence the Millennials felt Generation X tended to

complain too much and the Veterans and Boomers were out of touch and too rigid. While all the generations' felt that the Millennials were too demanding and required close supervision.

Furthermore, Generation X thought the Millennials were arrogant and self-absorbed and both the Xer's and Millennials believed the Boomers spent too much time working (Rinaldi, 2011). All generations felt that theirs is adaptable but Generation X and the Millennials believed the Baby Boomers and Veterans were not flexible in the workplace and failed to seek the life/work balance that the younger generations pursue. The research further showed that it was an even split between the Veterans and Baby Boomers (older) and Generation X and the Millennials (younger) when it comes to trusting each other and vice versa (Watt, 2010).

There was a growing realization that the conflict and resentment between all the generations' in the workforce was escalating and problematic. Understanding these differences, as Zemke et al. (2000) described, is paramount to making them work for and not against the organization dealing with these issues. Likewise, it was crucial in turning mistrust and suspicion into mutual respect and harmony. Organizations on the forefront of understanding generational diversity view these differences as strengths in the workplace to be nurtured and shaped.

The final question to be explored was what challenges the generations' face in gaining acceptance by the others? For the most part, each of the generations understood that there were differences among the cohorts and although they did not understand why, they wanted to close the gap but did not know how to approach it. Human resource managers and fire service leaders agreed that this issue was one of the top challenges for the future (Langan & Feuquay, 2010).

One area that the older generations should focus on was the need to communicate expectations to the younger groups and then back that up with meaningful, challenging, and structured training. This was even more important in the fire service as most of the younger



generations did not have the benefit of or understand the concept of a quasi-military organization (Rinaldi, 2011). The younger Gen Xer's and Millennials should understand that even though the older generations did not provide information lightning fast there is information to be gleaned from their years of experience. The most significant challenge to overcome was that of communication. "Collaboration becomes easier when different generations identify not just what separates them but also what unites them" (Martin & Tulgan, 2002, p. 53). This statement was the catalyst to what should have been addressed to bring generations closer together and bridge the gap. It was critical to learn to communicate with other generations' to prevent confrontations in the workplace. To achieve this one must have had an understanding that each person had their own way of thinking and often felt that it was the only right way albeit not always true. One must also understand that each person had individual habits, attitudes and behaviors that influenced their work environment (Hammill, 2005). By having an appreciation of generational characteristics and effort could be made to work effectively and harmoniously with each other. In their book, Delcampo et al. (2011) summarized "Combining competency understanding with the information about each generation's strengths, weaknesses, expectations, and values allows individuals within the organizations to build productive and positive relationships" (p. 33).

The literature review has defined the four generations employed within today's workforce. Additionally, it has established the link that one's values, beliefs, and work ethic was strongly influenced by the social and political climate in which they grew up in. The characteristics each group brought in turn impacts the workplace and often is the foundation for misunderstandings and conflicts. Research has been done to identify what assumptions have been made by each generation in regards to the others and that a lack of strong understanding exists. Subsequently it has been proven that communication is the key to bring generations

closer. By educating each group in the characteristics of the others it would provide the medium to gain a better understanding and in turn decreasing conflict to create a more amicable work climate. The findings in the literature review have helped to establish the base for the research needed to identify the components in relation to the researcher's organization in this applied research project. Furthermore, as surveys and questionnaires were developed and questions asked they were guided by the information attained from this review.

### Procedure

Research for this project began in March 2012 while attending the Executive Development course of the Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP) at the NFA. The Learning Resource Center (LRC) was utilized to find subject related information contained in previous applied research projects, trade magazines, and books. Additional research was conducted from April 2012 through June 2012 employing books and trade magazines published on the subject, on-line articles found via various search engines, and Firehouse, the Merced Fire Department (MFD) records management system. Key words and phrases used to gather information from on-line search engines included; generations, generational differences, generational values and work ethic, Veterans generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials. The purpose of the informational search was to answer the general components of the following questions: (a) what was the composition of generations' in Merced Fire Department's workforce? (b) What were the values and work ethic differences of generations' in the Merced Fire Department workforce? (c) How did the different generations' within the Merced Fire Department view each other in regards to values and work ethic? (d) What challenges were seen by each generation within the Merced Fire Department in gaining acceptance with others?

The remaining research was concentrated on the focused questions as they relate to the MFD starting with an internal records search. Information was gathered as to the generational makeup of the workforce of the MFD. This data was collected utilizing Firehouse record management software used by the organization. Personal information along with work history was included in the records which allowed birthdates to be evaluated in determining the number of employees that fall into each generational group.

The next question, what were the values and work ethic differences of generations in the Merced Fire Department workforce, was evaluated using an electronic survey (appendix A) disseminated to the total membership of the department, 61 personnel with a return of 55 surveys. The survey was created and delivered using Survey Monkey on-line survey software. The questions for this survey were created based on information gathered during the literature review in regards to identified characteristics of each generation. The questions covered a broad area of topics such as; education level, job motivators, communication preferences, intergenerational understanding and acceptance, and social aspects to create a snapshot of these characteristics within each of the generations. The responses for this survey were collected and downloaded from the Survey Monkey website (appendix B).

As an additional measure the same survey was distributed nationally to gain a glimpse as to whether other fire departments were experiencing the same concerns and demonstrating the same characteristics as found in the literature review and noted in the MFD survey. The national survey was distributed by direct email to fellow EFOP students for distribution to their respective agencies, the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) open forum, and the US Fire Administration and FEMA TradeNet newsletter, a total of 908 surveys were completed. The

responses for this survey were collected and downloaded from the Survey Monkey website (appendix C).

To gather data on how the different generations' within the Merced Fire Department view each other in regards to values and work ethic a more focused personnel questionnaire (appendix D) was developed. The questions were created to gather not only additional information in relation to each individual's values and work ethic but to also gather their view on the other generations' values and work ethic. The focus of these questions was to determine what view or perception each generation has of the others. The questionnaires were distributed to all members of the department via an email and hard copies placed in all stations and the administration, it was requested that all responses be turned in anonymously. A 50% return rate was achieved with the questionnaire. Although not considered a substantial return rate all generations working within the MFD provided responses. A summary of the final questionnaire responses for these questions were grouped by generation and compiled in a Microsoft Word document (appendix E).

Results for the last question, what challenges are seen by each generation within the Merced Fire Department in gaining acceptance with others, were also gathered using the same personnel questionnaire as the previous question (appendix D). The delivery and sample was the same as discussed above. The two questions in regard to this topic were created. To identify the challenges each individual feels may be hindering acceptance of their generation by the others, and to gather their opinion on what they think would help other generations understand and accept their generation. A summary of the final questionnaire responses for these questions were grouped by generation and compiled in a Microsoft Word document (appendix E).

There were limitations to the research procedures. Primarily the generalization that determining a group of individual values, beliefs, and work ethic by a date range is highly effective. Although previous research has revealed that the time period and individual was raised in did influence their personal traits in life and work it could not be assumed that everyone would fall into these parameters, especially individuals born on the cusp of a new generation time frame. Additionally, there was very little research specifically studying the fire service in regards to generational diversity and conflict. A majority of the findings in the literature review was collected from studies, reports, and books about the subject in the private sector. Lastly, the use of questionnaires could be limiting due to the writers experience in developing this format along with the reader's interpretation of the questions. Members filling out the questionnaires also could not be detailed in their answers giving a limited response minimizing the full potential.

### Results

Through the descriptive research method utilizing a literature review, evaluation of internal records, electronic survey, and a focused questionnaire results for the four research questions were ascertained.

A search of the Firehouse record management system maintained by the MFD enabled the author to answer the first question of "what is the composition of generations in the MFD workforce?" It was determined that the MFD employed nine members from the Baby Boomer generation, born between 1946 and 1964, comprising 15% of the roster. Generation X, born between 1965 and 1980, encompasses 33 personnel for a total of 54% of the workforce while the Millennials, born between 1981 and 2000, finish out the membership with 19 personnel and 31% of the roster. No personnel from the Veteran generation was employed by the MFD.

Next the author utilized the electronic survey to compile general characteristic information in relation to what was found during the literature review on previous research. As with the internal records search this survey reaffirmed that Generation X maintains the largest cohort within the organization. Out of the 55 responses approximately 44% have some college course but no degree, 42% of the personnel have a two-year degree, while 14% hold a bachelor's degree. A small percentage, 11, had served in the military prior to joining the MFD; however, 80% had been employed elsewhere full-time prior to joining.

When the question was posed “do you feel that the other generations (older/younger) at your work value your views, beliefs, and work ethic”, 42.6% stated their answer as sometimes, while 27.8% stated often and 27.8% responded as seldom. When the question was turned to the specific member asking “do you value other generations (older/younger) at work views, beliefs, and work ethic”, 50.9% replied often, 40% answered sometimes, and 7.3% gave the answer of always. The next set of questions was asked to gauge understanding between generations. The first was asking the reader if they felt that they were misunderstood by other generations at work. With 54 respondents to this question 37% stated sometimes, 31.5% as seldom, 22.2% replying often, and 7.4% as never, and 1.9% stated that they were always misunderstood by other generations. The second part of the question once again turned the focus back on the reader and asked if they felt that they understood why other generations at work act, and/or make the decisions that they do. The responses were split with 45.5% stating often as their answer while 41.8% replied sometimes. The remaining answers were 7.3% claiming that they always understood and 5.5% stating that they seldom understood.

The next series of questions from the electronic survey gathered results on general characteristics outlined in the literature review. The first being “do you feel dealing with other

generations (older/younger) has caused conflict in the workplace”, seldom was the answer given by 36.4%, sometimes by 30.9%, often by 25.5%, never by 5.5%, and always was reported by 1.8%. The author also asked if the reader prefers to socialize with members of their own generation. A high percentage, 67.3, stated yes while 32.7% replied no. They were then asked if they prefer to work on teams with members of their own generation. This result was aligned almost evenly with 57.4% reporting that they prefer working within their generation and 42.6% answering no. When asked what authority should be based on, out of the four choices given the responders stated; proven merit at 63%, overall experience 29.6%, seniority 5.6% and overall contributions at 1.9%. The final question asked was if the respondent thought the fire service should train more on generational diversity and the issues it may create. The surveyed responses were 50.9% stating yes while 49.1% do not believe the fire service should train on generational diversity. The complete survey results can be found in appendix B.

As noted in the procedures section the same electronic survey was distributed nationally to obtain a snapshot of other departments and potential issues related to the subject. In brief out of the 908 responses the majority came from the Baby Boomers and Generation X with 50.6% and 42.2% respectfully. A majority of the responders also held a higher level of education with a total of 72% having a two-year degree or higher. As with the MFD very few had military experience while a majority did work full-time prior to entering the fire service. The national survey also aligned with the MFD survey in that respondents preferred to socialize with their own generation; however, was opposite in that the majority stated that they did not prefer to work on teams with their own generation. The last significant difference to note is the final question of whether the fire service should train more on generational diversity. The national

response differed from the MFD survey in that a greater percentage, 74%, replied that they did feel it was important. The results of the national survey can be found in appendix C.

The first two questions asked on the questionnaire delivered also helped to answer the value and work ethic differences inquiry. As to the personal values question the Baby Boomers responded by stating that they value family, friends, hard work, dedication, honesty, personal integrity and respect. Generation X also touched on honesty and family but also added that they valued their peers' opinions, were self-motivated, believed in character, and felt discipline should be a primary factor at work. The Millennials noted that respect and courtesy should be given when due, treat others as you expect to be treated, and do your job before you criticize others.

In regards to work ethic the Baby Boomers felt that they were lucky and fortunate to have their career and that members' should know their job and do it well. One statement was that every member should be the professional they were hired to be. Generation X commented that nothing is entitled to them and that everyone must prove their worth. Furthermore, position and reputation must be earned and what you put in is what you get out. Lastly Gen X feels that a person needs to do more than is asked of them and don't stop until it is done. The Millennials stated that a person should just get the job done and lead by example. They also felt that they got paid well to do their job and that having a smile on their face while doing it was important. Additionally, it was stated that work should not be taken lightly and that others should not suffer for a person's lack of motivation in life and work.

The personnel questionnaire was further utilized to answer "how do the generations within the MFD view each other in regards to values and work ethic?" Addressing values first the Baby Boomers' that responded feel that all generations want to serve the public well;



however, the older members are better able to come to grip with the fact that they are not the center of the universe and they appreciate the traditions, hard work, and sacrifices of the past. Whereas, the younger generations tend to value themselves first and foremost, with everything else coming secondary.

Generation X members stated that the Baby Boomers value family and life and often are more team oriented. They also felt that the older generation focused more on respect and tradition. As for the Millennials, Generation X replied that they tend to value money, status, and material things. They also felt that the younger members focused more on themselves or their small cliques than on the larger collective. The Gen X'ers that responded agreed that the Millennials tended to display an attitude of entitlement or sense that they are owed everything rather than earning it.

The Millennials mentioned that the older generations have a small percentage of members that were respectful to the younger members and set reasonable goals wanting them to succeed. As for the remainder of the older generations' the Millennials felt that they look down on them and were more of a hindrance to their progress. The younger members felt that the older generations held solid family values. One result that the Millennials stated was that their generation displayed a high sense of entitlement and had a more selfish outlook on their career with expectations of rising through the ranks with no real effort.

In regards to work ethic, the Baby Boomers' felt that both of the younger generations were skilled and well trained in their jobs; however, they commented that the older generations tend to understand their limitations while the younger overestimated their abilities. The greatest work ethic difference the Boomers related was that the older members want to know what needs to be done and by when, while the younger wanted to know why they had to do it. Additionally,

the Boomers stated that the older generations have a commitment to the organization while the younger has a commitment to themselves.

Generation X related that the Baby Boomers seemed to value work as a part of life and maintained a solid work ethic but sometimes tended to be stuck in the past. They felt that the Boomers did not like new ways of doing things. Gen X's impression of the Millennials' was that they are lazy with no real work ethic and wanted everything the easy way but had no reservation constantly asking why they have to do things. They also relate that they felt the younger generation just sees work as a means to an end, doing just the bare minimum to get by.

The Millennials' described the work ethic of the older generations' as solid with a sense that they are thankful for their job. They also relayed that the older generations tend to work until the work is done, but they commented that their own generation often worked harder trying to get out of work. Furthermore, the younger generation stated that the older members work for the reward, while the younger only worked after they received the award. One respondent stated that they felt the older generations complained about their job too much and brought the department down. Additionally, this respondent felt that the older generation was out of touch with technology and leadership. Furthermore, the same respondent relayed that the younger generation did not go above and beyond because the results were the same as doing the bare minimum, a satisfactory evaluation and no further praise.

The final question to be answered was "what challenges are seen by each generation within the MFD in gaining acceptance with others?" The results for this query were obtained via the last two questions of the personnel questionnaire distributed.

The Baby Boomers' responded that the greatest challenge was that the younger generations' appeared to not care nor have a desire to understand the older generation. The older

members were only tolerated due to their higher rank and seniority. Additionally, the Boomers' felt that the younger generations considered it their right to move to the front of the line just because they show up for work. As for gaining acceptance the Boomers' felt that all generations' need to work to understand each other better, themselves included. They understood that they have had the benefit of working through both age groups within their career but could overvalue the experiences of the past making the younger generations' feel as they were stuck there rather than learning new skills and abilities. However, the older members stated that the younger generations' needed to understand that past history is part of how the organization got to where it was and that it cannot just be discounted because the younger members were not around to experience it.

The greatest challenges seen by Generation X were that the Boomers saw them as having lack of experience in terms of years while the Millennials saw them as being technologically illiterate. Gen X also saw a challenge in the fact that they feel the Boomers were too stuck in their ways and is not flexible when it comes to new ideas. Several of the Gen X respondents stated that the primary issue needed to overcome was different sets of values and experiences, not right or wrong, just different. One final note from this cohort was summing up in one word the issue with both the Boomers and Millennials and the word used was ego. In gaining acceptance the X'ers felt that being given an opportunity to lead by example would be the best way to overcome the lack of understanding. Additionally, the need for all generations to recognize the good traits of others even if they do not conform to theirs was important. Several members of this group commented that it was vital for the generations working in the MFD to understand that they are all different and knowing why they are different was as important as

realizing just the dissimilarities. One Gen X member stated that the only way to gain acceptance was through time and accountability.

Lastly, were the results of the Millennials' thoughts on challenges and acceptance by the other generations. The obstacles this younger generation saw are that the older members felt that they are lazy and wanted things for very little effort. They also felt that because of better pay and benefits, and not needing to work two jobs as in the past, the older generations belittled them for not suffering as they did. The Millennials also felt that the older groups treated them poorly with little respect and act as it was normal and accepted. The primary theme presented by several members of this group was overall attitude as a group. As for their thoughts on gaining acceptance, the Millennials had very little to say with quite a few leaving that question blank. One of the thoughts presented dealt with attitude. The suggestion was that members of all generations should not let outside influences such as economy and pension reform affects their attitude towards other members, especially in relation to two-tiered benefits that existed in the organization. They also felt that a difference of opinions is healthy as long as they were done respectfully and accepted with open ears and not summarily dismissed. The last comment was in regards to expectations. The Millennials relayed that it was important for their group to talk to their supervisors about their career goals and seek out the expectations for themselves in meeting these goals. This group's goal was to better the organization as a whole, they felt that explaining how they intended to accomplish this would create better understanding between all groups.

### Discussion

Research shows that there are four generations in today's workforce; the Veterans, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and the Millennials. Research further identifies that the era a group was born and raised highly influences their values and beliefs in both life and work. These

characteristics are mainly influenced by the social, economic, and political climate during these times. These differing characteristics are known to be evident in the workplace and often are a contributing factor to conflict (Hammill, 2005). The MFD has three of the four generations in its workforce; the Baby Boomers, Generation X, and the Millennials. The missing Veteran Generation can most likely be attributed to two reasons. The first is that with an enhanced retirement benefit most firefighters are able to retire in their early to mid-50's thus substantially reducing or eliminating the numbers of Veterans from the fire service. Secondly, the MFD went through a significant turnover in personnel due to early retirement offerings to address the current financial issues. This event creates a very young workforce in the MFD.

Understanding general characteristics of an organization as a whole is important in developing the complete picture of the total generational influence. Overall, generations can be viewed as a collective set of behaviors, attitudes, and experiences that will most definitely affect their work life (Delcampo et al., 2011).

The Baby Boomer generation is known for their belief in working their way up the ladder to achieve success and is less likely to change employers as compared to their younger cohorts (Mayhew, 2011). As stated by Delcampo et al. (2011) this group also believes in working efficiently and is known to be team-oriented, although they tend to shy away from conformity and rules. Furthermore, this generation is known for being hard workers who established the 60 hour work week (Cekada, 2012). Furthermore, they believe in dedication and loyalty to the organization.

The Baby Boomers employed by the MFD, nine in total, did relay through their responses that they value hard work but that they also value family and the time spent with them. These statements both coincide with and contradict the 60 hour work week mentality that previous

research has shown from this group. The author believes that the contradiction stems from the alternative work schedule the fire service utilizes as compared to the private industry. Most fire service members, minus a small percentage at the highest ranks, typically work a shift schedule that has them on 24 hours at a time allowing for a greater amount of time spent at home which helps reinforce the family time. This group did identify that dedication to the job was one of their primary values which coincides with the common trait found of most Baby Boomers and has been credited to being raised by post war Veteran parents. In regards to work ethic this group commented that they are very fortunate to have this job and that all should strive to be professional and do their job well. As for being fortunate having their career the author feels this stems from the days of lower wages and benefits. The Baby Boomers within the organization are known to have worked two or more jobs early in their career to support their families. Additionally, with most of the Boomers holding higher ranks the professionalism and getting the job done well is directed at the younger generations that they see as not meeting the standard the Boomers are held too during their careers.

As for their responses to the value differences of the generations, the Baby Boomers responded that they felt all generations want to serve the public to the best of their ability. This is attributed to the hiring process and training of new fire service members in that the public service component is installed in all from the beginning. The Boomers also feel that the older generations understand that they are part of the big picture, whereas, they feel the younger generations tend to view themselves as the center of what is happening. This statement links to the characteristic of loyalty displayed by most Boomers. They were taught the concept of teamwork early on and were raised through their career with group effort in all accomplishments. Conversely, as Twenge (2006) states the Millennials were raised to feel that they can accomplish

anything and everything; this may give the younger members the sense of entitlement as soon as they walk in the door; thereby, seeming self-absorbed. In responding to work ethic differences the Boomers once again compliment all other generations by stating that they see them as being very skilled and well trained. But they feel their generation tends to understand their limitations while the younger groups overestimate their abilities. The author feels this is in direct correlation to the statement above regarding the Millennials feeling of being able to accomplish anything and their confidence level. The Millennials are well trained and come into most organizations with higher education than their supervisors. This level of technical knowledge can be seen as over confidence by the older generations and is quite often misunderstood. The greatest work ethic difference the Boomers relate is that the older members want to know what needs to be done and by when, while the younger wants to primarily know why they have to do it. Once again, the older generation was raised in a stricter environment at home and work while the inquisitive mind of the younger members seek the understanding of why they are doing what they are doing.

In answering the questions of challenges and acceptance, the Baby Boomers feel that their greatest issue is that the younger generations do not appear to, nor have a desire to, understand the older generation. The author believes this is a combination of the older generation not understanding the generational characteristics of the younger and the over exuberance of the younger members not being tempered within the framework of the organization. As for gaining acceptance the Boomers feel that all generations need to work to understand each other better, themselves included. This is a vital task to accomplishing generational understanding. This group understands that they have had the benefit of working through both age groups within their career but can overvalue the experiences of the past making the younger generations feel they are

stuck there rather than learning new skills and abilities. However, the younger generations must understand that history is a part of everything. It is a part of who each member is and also how the organization has come to where it is at. History is not portrayed as an excuse to why the organization does things the way it does, but as information needed to see the whole picture of what got it to this point in time.

In reply to the value and work ethic differences, MFD Generation X members, 33 in total, feel honesty and family are important and added that they value their peers' opinions, are self-motivated, believe in character, and feel discipline should be a primary factor at work. Generation X, also known as the latch key kids, has been described as highly independent and self-reliant. As Delcampo et al. (2011) describes this can be due to their being the least protected generation of kids due to high divorce rate and the need for both parents to work. This group is also known to want to seek a balance between work and home and breaks free of the 60 hour work week. Xer's thrive on meaningful work and challenging assignments and want the responsibility to achieve goals in their way (Mayhew, 2011). Responses by MFD Gen Xer's appear to support these characteristics. They state that nothing is entitled to them and that everyone must prove their worth. Furthermore, position and reputation must be earned and what you put in is what you get out. Lastly MFD Gen Xer's feel that a person needs to do more than is asked of them and don't stop until it is done. This generation is not just about the money but seek alternative perks as part of their compensation. They often ask for these perks and receive them due to their skill levels. Generation X supervisors tend to be competent, fair, and are straight to the point type of leaders (Zemke et al., 2000).

Responding to how they view the other cohorts within the organization in regards to values and work ethic MFD Generation X members first commented that they appreciate the



older members who are active and the younger members who recognize that they are fortunate to have this career. The author feels this type of expression directly coincides with the overall characteristic of valuing their peers' opinions often displayed by Generation X. This group also feels that the older generation is more team-oriented which corresponds with research conducted by Delcampo et al. (2011). Conversely, this group feels that the younger generation acts entitled. MFD Generation X continues to state that they felt the last generation to retire actually had the strongest work ethic, while the Baby Boomers display a solid work ethic, and the Millennials lean more towards the lazy side. It is understandable that the older generations' would align similarly in work ethic as this trait is passed between the groups. As for the thoughts on the younger members, the author believes that the older members do not understand or know how to effectively connect with the newer breed of employee and their nuances.

The remarks for the last question of challenges and acceptance made by the Xer's within the organization exhibited that they do understand that all members are different and each group set of values and experiences in life vary. One comment was made that we are where we are because we do not understand each other. They also feel that education is the best way to close the gap between the generations. These comments are important in overcoming the first hurdle of openness or willingness to accept information on generational diversity.

The last generation to discuss is the highly confident; I can do anything, Millennials, 19 members' total. This group benefited from the overshadowing Generation X parent group. These parental figures have been highly supportive to their kids instilling as much confidence as possible. As Twenge (2006) states this most definitely carries over into the workforce where the Millennials feel they can tackle any task and deserve praise and reward for that capability. This can most assuredly be seen by others as entitlement while the Millennials feel that it is just being

rewarded for their skills, whether warranted or not. Additionally, this group feels that it is their right to express their views and to be heard along with not expecting to have to pay their dues in achieving advancement (Mayhew, 2011). Interestingly enough the Millennials working within the MFD responded the harshest to their own generation in answering the generational questionnaire. Concerning values and work ethic they commented that respect should be given or received when due and that a person should strive do their job well. They further stated that a member of their cohort should not take their work lightly and do not make others suffer for their lack of motivation. This can likely be attributed to the fire service mindset of hard work and dedication. Although all may not agree due to their biases each generation wants to do well and serve the public as the job requires. Martin and Tulgan (2002) stated that the Millennials are set to be the most demanding generation. Yet in regards to the MFD it seems that the Millennials just want to be heard. They readily admit that their generation tends to be more self-centered and demanding but only in their eagerness to advance. This is perceived by the older members as the cutting to the front of the line mentality without paying your dues. Whereas, the Millennials feel that obtaining the highest level of education of any generation is part of paying your dues.

The Millennials hate micromanagement and do not want to sacrifice their family or personal interests for their careers. This is one of the first groups working within the MFD that does not have nor wants to work a second job to make ends meet. When discussing the challenges of gaining acceptance the Millennials list the lack of respect as the biggest obstacle with attitudes coming in second. These are interesting comments coming from this group since they are seen by the other two generations as having the greatest lack of respect and the most attitudes. Once again the author feels that the confidence level of the Millennials is taken out of context by the other groups. However, with an understanding of how they are seen the younger

members may consciously temper their confidence as a meet in the middle gesture. As one Millennial member of the MFD stated: it usually takes change on all parties behalf to gain acceptance.

Each generation within the MFD shows both similar characteristics as described by previous researchers and demonstrated that they also do not fit the established mold. The author unquestionably believes that that main factor of not falling into the norm as detailed by others is due to very limited research being completed in the fire service. Whether all agree or not, a paramilitary organization is going to have different outcomes compared to the private work force. The amount of time firefighters spend at work and home, the nature of their job, and the reliance on each other for their safety is going to alter the outcomes of some of the characteristics.

The organizational implications of generational misunderstanding are significant. Conflict does not make for a healthy organization, and consumes an exponential amount of time and effort in resolving. As stated by Martin & Tulgan (2002) regardless of what generation a member was raised in, some time or another they will experience a disagreement that will most likely stem from a generational misunderstanding. They further elaborate that when generations identify what unites them versus solely what separates them, collaboration becomes simpler.

The organizational implication is even greater within the fire service as a strict chain of command and protocol is vital for public and responder safety. Any conflict whether in the station or on the fire scene will disrupt the group dynamic. Conflict on the fire scene is often easier to handle as the formal chain of command alleviates issues by knowing who is making the decisions at the time. The conflicts that arise in the stations tend to be the ones that fester over time and can spread not only to another station but even another shift if not dealt with. This is the reason it is critical to bridge the gap between generations and to provide some understanding of

each to educate all members. It is vital that each group's values, expectations, strengths, and weaknesses are expressed to each other to gain understanding and create productive work relationships (Delcampo et al., 2011).

### Recommendations

The purpose of this applied research project was to gain understanding of the characteristics of generational diversity and how they affect MFD personnel. Furthermore, by developing an understanding of generational diversity a concerted effort can then be taken to educate all of the members, current and future, to help bridge the gap between generations within the organization and thus minimize conflict associated with this subject. Based on the literature review and original research; the following recommendations are assembled for the MFD.

To address the short term, immediate needs of the organization it is recommended that initial training be provided to all members on generational diversity and its affects. It would be important to seek out a professional to deliver this training due to its sensitive and highly confrontational topics. A local college professor that specializes in this subject should be utilized to ensure solid and factual information related to generational diversity is provided and that meaningful dialogue is generated and most importantly guided. Continuing education would also be important for the organization. The two areas that should be focused on are based off the primary criticisms found through the questionnaire. The first being the younger generation describing the older as being out of touch with technology, the second being the older groups concerns that the younger generation does not care how things were done in the past. The author believes providing more training on technology would help the older cohorts become comfortable with technology and new methods of working and giving the younger group more education of the history of the department along with how current practices were developed and

why could alleviate the concerns. Furthermore, by utilizing the older members to provide the history and the younger ones the technology training more interaction will occur between the generations.

One other short term recommendation would be to sit down with each generation separately to gather more in depth thoughts on the areas briefly covered in the questionnaire. Allowing the open dialogue would most certainly produce more meaningful discussions on personal values and work ethics along with views of the other generations than could be gathered from the questionnaire. This information could be assembled to assist in the structured training provided by a professional as mentioned above.

Long term suggestions would be to create a 360 degree evaluation to be utilized by all personnel. Currently within the MFD supervisors are the only ones who conduct evaluations of their subordinates. By allowing all members to conduct evaluations up and down the chain of command it will allow expression not only by captains or battalion chiefs on how their crews are performing but also allow the crews to evaluate their leaders. This would provide insight to the supervisors on their performance that they may not realize is happening or at a minimum produce meaningful dialogue between the members. It is suggested that the 360 evaluation utilized for all members include generational characteristics to ensure that the information provided on generational diversity is being used effectively. To also maintain generational diversity education for the long term it is further recommended that all new hires go through the training as part of their introductory academy or probationary period.

Continual evaluation of the topic of generational diversity and the issues that arise from it should occur. This will ensure that the recommendations are working or identify if new elements of the issue have manifested into problems that would need adjustments to further training. Re-

utilizing the existing survey and questionnaire could be used but it is suggested that further research be completed and new methods be developed to gauge the topic in the future.

The author believes that the aforementioned recommendations will greatly help the members of the MFD gain understanding of the generations that work within the organization. This understanding will lead to greater tolerance and patience with the end result being less conflict derived from generational diversity. Furthermore, garnering this education will most assuredly produce stronger leaders and workers who appreciate each other's differences as much as their similarities affording for a more harmonious work environment.

Although the data gathering tools used in this study project could be used it is advised that future researchers addressing generational diversity issues create new measures that focus on the organization specifically being studied. Additional literature review should also be conducted in the hopes that more focus will eventually be placed on this topic within the fire service. It is a certainty that the issues of generational diversity are not only being experienced by the MFD. As more departments begin to realize that a fair amount of their conflicts are generational based the fire service will then start to see more of a focus on this topic which in turn will be the driving factor in developing study's, information, and education to assist other fire agency's in bridging their generational gap.

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## Appendix A

## Fire Service Generational Survey

**1. Which generational cohort category below includes your birth year?**

- ☐ 1922-1945 Veterans
- ☐ 1946-1964 Baby Boomer's
- ☐ 1965-1980 Generation X
- ☐ 1981-2000 Millennials

**2. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?**

- ☐ Less than high school degree
- ☐ High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)
- ☐ Some college but no degree
- ☐ Associate degree
- ☐ Bachelor degree
- ☐ Graduate degree

**3. Have you served in a branch of the military, active or reserve?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**4. Did you hold a full-time job prior to entering the fire service?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**5. What is your current rank/position?**

- ☐ Firefighter
- ☐ Engineer/Driver Operator
- ☐ Company Officer/Captain
- ☐ Chief Officer
- ☐ Prevention

**6. What is the most important job motivator for you?**

- ☐ Money
- ☐ Public recognition
- ☐ Benefits
- ☐ Positive feedback from peers
- ☐ Positive feedback from superiors
- ☐ Self-satisfaction

**7. What is your preferred method of on the job communication?**

- ☐ Face-to-face

- ☐ E-mail
- ☐ Memo
- ☐ Phone
- ☐ Social media

**8. What is your preferred method of receiving job performance feedback?**

- ☐ Face-to-face
- ☐ E-mail
- ☐ Memo
- ☐ Phone
- ☐ Personnel evaluation

**9. How often do you prefer to receive job performance feedback?**

- ☐ Often
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Seldom
- ☐ Never

**10. Using the generational cohort categories in question #1, do you feel that other generations (older/younger) at your work value your views, beliefs, and work ethic?**

- ☐ Always

- ☐ Often
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Seldom
- ☐ Never

**11. Using the generational cohort categories in question #1, do you value other generations (older/younger) at work views, beliefs, and work ethic?**

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Seldom
- ☐ Never

**12. Using the generational cohort categories in question #1, do you feel that you are misunderstood by other generations (older/younger) at work?**

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Seldom
- ☐ Never

**13. Using the generational cohort categories in question #1, do you feel that you understand why other generations (older/younger) at work act, and/or make decisions the way they do?**

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Seldom
- ☐ Never

**14. Do you feel dealing with other generations (older/younger) has caused conflict in the workplace?**

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Seldom
- ☐ Never

**15. Do you stay after work to complete tasks?**

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Sometimes

☐ Seldom

☐ Never

**16. Do you cancel social/family activities to take overtime shifts?**

☐ Always

☐ Often

☐ Sometimes

☐ Seldom

☐ Never

**17. Do you prefer to socialize with members of your own generation?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

**18. Do you prefer to work on teams with members of your own generation?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

**19. Do you feel that it is difficult communicating with other generations?**

☐ Always

☐ Often

☐ Sometimes

☐ Seldom

☐ Never

**20. Rate your preferred method of training delivery from 1-4, with 1 being you're preferred and 4 you're least preferred?**

	1	2	3	4
<b>Hands-on</b>	<input type="radio"/> Hands-on 1	<input type="radio"/> Hands-on 2	<input type="radio"/> Hands-on 3	<input type="radio"/> Hands-on 4
<b>Lecture</b>	<input type="radio"/> Lecture 1	<input type="radio"/> Lecture 2	<input type="radio"/> Lecture 3	<input type="radio"/> Lecture 4
<b>Multi-media</b>	<input type="radio"/> Multi-media 1	<input type="radio"/> Multi-media 2	<input type="radio"/> Multi-media 3	<input type="radio"/> Multi-media 4
<b>On-line</b>	<input type="radio"/> On-line 1	<input type="radio"/> On-line 2	<input type="radio"/> On-line 3	<input type="radio"/> On-line 4

**21. Do you use more than two means of technology while at work (i.e. computer, smart phone, internet, on-line networking, web-based training, and social media)?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

**22. What is your preferred workplace environment?**

☐ Conservative/Clear chain of command

☐ Democratic

☐ Functional/efficient

☐ Collaborative/Creative

**23. Do you view work as an....**

- ☐ Obligation
- ☐ Exciting adventure
- ☐ Difficult challenge
- ☐ A means to an end

**24. Authority should be based on....**

- ☐ Seniority
- ☐ Overall experience
- ☐ Proven merit
- ☐ Overall contributions

**25. Do you think the fire service should train more on generational diversity and the issues it may create?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No



## Appendix B

## MFD Generational Survey Results

**1. Which generational cohort category below includes your birth year?**

	answered question	55	
	skipped question	0	
		Response Percent	Response Count
1922-1945 Veterans		0.0%	0
1946-1964 Baby Boomer's		14.5%	8
<b>1965-1980 Generation X</b>		61.8%	34
1981-2000 Millennials		23.6%	13

**2. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?**

	answered question	55	
	skipped question	0	
		Response Percent	Response Count
Less than high school degree		0.0%	0
High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)		0.0%	0
<b>Some college but no degree</b>		43.6%	24
Associate degree		41.8%	23
Bachelor degree		14.5%	8
Graduate degree		0.0%	0

**3. Have you served in a branch of the military, active or reserve?**

answered question	55
skipped question	0

**3. Have you served in a branch of the military, active or reserve?**

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	10.9%	6
No	89.1%	49

**4. Did you hold a full-time job prior to entering the fire service?**

	answered question	55
	skipped question	0
	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	80.0%	44
No	20.0%	11

**5. What is your current rank/position?**

	answered question	55
	skipped question	0
	Response Percent	Response Count
Firefighter	32.7%	18
Engineer/Driver Operator	27.3%	15
Company Officer/Captain	30.9%	17
Chief Officer	9.1%	5
Prevention	0.0%	0

**6. What is the most important job motivator for you?**

	answered question	55
	skipped question	0
	Response	Response

**6. What is the most important job motivator for you?**

	Percent	Count
Money	21.8%	12
Public recognition	1.8%	1
Benefits	3.6%	2
Positive feedback from peers	9.1%	5
Positive feedback from superiors	5.5%	3
<b>Self-satisfaction</b>	<b>58.2%</b>	<b>32</b>

**7. What is your preferred method of on the job communication?**

	answered question	55
	skipped question	0
	Response Percent	Response Count
<b>Face-to-face</b>	89.1%	49
E-mail	10.9%	6
Memo	0.0%	0
Phone	0.0%	0
Social media	0.0%	0

**8. What is your preferred method of receiving job performance feedback?**

	answered question	54
	skipped question	1
	Response Percent	Response Count
<b>Face-to-face</b>	87.0%	47
E-mail	0.0%	0

**8. What is your preferred method of receiving job performance feedback?**

Memo	0.0%	0
Phone	1.9%	1
Personnel evaluation	11.1%	6

**9. How often do you prefer to receive job performance feedback?**

	answered question	55
	skipped question	0
	Response Percent	Response Count
Often	36.4%	20
<b>Sometimes</b>	52.7%	29
Seldom	9.1%	5
Never	1.8%	1

**10. Using the generational cohort categories in question #1, do you feel that other generations (older/younger) at your work value your views, beliefs, and work ethic?**

	answered question	54
	skipped question	1
	Response Percent	Response Count
Always	1.9%	1
Often	27.8%	15
<b>Sometimes</b>	42.6%	23
Seldom	27.8%	15
Never	0.0%	0

**11. Using the generational cohort categories in question #1, do you value other generations (older/younger) at work views, beliefs, and work ethic?**

	answered question	55	
	skipped question	0	
		Response Percent	Response Count
Always		7.3%	4
<b>Often</b>		50.9%	28
Sometimes		40.0%	22
Seldom		1.8%	1
Never		0.0%	0

**12. Using the generational cohort categories in question #1, do you feel that you are misunderstood by other generations (older/younger) at work?**

	answered question	54	
	skipped question	1	
		Response Percent	Response Count
Always		1.9%	1
Often		22.2%	12
<b>Sometimes</b>		37.0%	20
Seldom		31.5%	17
Never		7.4%	4

**13. Using the generational cohort categories in question #1, do you feel that you understand why other generations (older/younger) at work act, and/or make decisions the way they do?**

answered question	55
skipped question	0
	Response Response

**13. Using the generational cohort categories in question #1, do you feel that you understand why other generations (older/younger) at work act, and/or make decisions the way they do?**

	Percent	Count
Always	7.3%	4
<b>Often</b>	45.5%	25
Sometimes	41.8%	23
Seldom	5.5%	3
Never	0.0%	0

**14. Do you feel dealing with other generations (older/younger) has caused conflict in the workplace?**

answered question	55
skipped question	0

	Response Percent	Response Count
Always	1.8%	1
Often	25.5%	14
Sometimes	30.9%	17
<b>Seldom</b>	36.4%	20
Never	5.5%	3

**15. Do you stay after work to complete tasks?**

answered question	55
skipped question	0

	Response Percent	Response Count
Always	3.6%	2
Often	14.5%	8
<b>Sometimes</b>	34.5%	19

**15. Do you stay after work to complete tasks?**

Seldom	30.9%	17
Never	16.4%	9

**16. Do you cancel social/family activities to take overtime shifts?**

answered question	55
skipped question	0

	Response Percent	Response Count
Always	1.8%	1
Often	16.4%	9
<b>Sometimes</b>	43.6%	24
Seldom	23.6%	13
Never	14.5%	8

**17. Do you prefer to socialize with members of your own generation?**

answered question	55
skipped question	0

	Response Percent	Response Count
<b>Yes</b>	67.3%	37
No	32.7%	18

**18. Do you prefer to work on teams with members of your own generation?**

answered question	54
skipped question	1

	Response Percent	Response Count
<b>Yes</b>	57.4%	31

**18. Do you prefer to work on teams with members of your own generation?**

No	42.6%	23
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**19. Do you feel that it is difficult communicating with other generations?**

answered question	55
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skipped question	0
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	Response Percent	Response Count
Always	0.0%	0
Often	9.1%	5
<b>Sometimes</b>	50.9%	28
Seldom	29.1%	16
Never	10.9%	6

**20. Rate your preferred method of training delivery from 1-4, with 1 being your preferred and 4 your least preferred?**

answered question	55
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skipped question	0
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	1	2	3	4	Rating Average	Response Count
Hands-on	92.7% (51)	3.6% (2)	1.8% (1)	1.8% (1)	1.13	55
Lecture	3.6% (2)	41.8% (23)	25.5% (14)	29.1% (16)	2.80	55
Multi-media	5.5% (3)	43.6% (24)	36.4% (20)	14.5% (8)	2.60	55
On-line	1.8% (1)	27.3% (15)	29.1% (16)	41.8% (23)	3.11	55

**21. Do you use more than two means of technology while at work (i.e. computer, smart phone, internet, on-line networking, web-based training, and social media)?**

answered question	55
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**21. Do you use more than two means of technology while at work (i.e. computer, smart phone, internet, on-line networking, web-based training, and social media)?**

	skipped question	0	
		Response Percent	Response Count
<b>Yes</b>		92.7%	51
No		7.3%	4

**22. What is your preferred workplace environment?**

	answered question	55	
	skipped question	0	
		Response Percent	Response Count
Conservative/Clear chain of command		34.5%	19
Democratic		1.8%	1
<b>Functional/efficient</b>		50.9%	28
Collaborative/Creative		12.7%	7

**23. Do you view work as an....**

	answered question	54	
	skipped question	1	
		Response Percent	Response Count
Obligation		18.5%	10
<b>Exciting adventure</b>		61.1%	33
Difficult challenge		1.9%	1
A means to an end		18.5%	10

**24. Authority should be based on....**

	answered question	54	
	skipped question	1	
		Response Percent	Response Count
Seniority		5.6%	3
Overall experience		29.6%	16
<b>Proven merit</b>		63.0%	34
Overall contributions		1.9%	1

**25. Do you think the fire service should train more on generational diversity and the issues it may create?**

	answered question	55	
	skipped question	0	
		Response Percent	Response Count
<b>Yes</b>		50.9%	28
No		49.1%	27

## Appendix C

## National Generational Survey Results

**1. Which generational cohort category below includes your birth year?**

answered question	912	
skipped question	0	
	Response Percent	Response Count
1922-1945 Veterans	1.4%	13
<b>1946-1964 Baby Boomer's</b>	50.4%	460
1965-1980 Generation X	42.3%	386
1981-2000 Millennials	5.8%	53

**2. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?**

answered question	912	
skipped question	0	
	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than high school degree	0.2%	2
High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)	4.6%	42
Some college but no degree	22.7%	207
Associate degree	25.3%	231
<b>Bachelor degree</b>	30.3%	276
Graduate degree	16.9%	154

**3. Have you served in a branch of the military, active or reserve?**

answered question	906
skipped question	6

**3. Have you served in a branch of the military, active or reserve?**

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	20.4%	185
No	79.6%	721

**4. Did you hold a full-time job prior to entering the fire service?**

answered question	909
skipped question	3

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	87.2%	793
No	12.8%	116

**5. What is your current rank/position?**

answered question	908
skipped question	4

	Response Percent	Response Count
Firefighter	13.8%	125
Engineer/Driver Operator	7.6%	69
Company Officer/Captain	17.0%	154
<b>Chief Officer</b>	59.6%	541
Prevention	2.1%	19

**6. What is the most important job motivator for you?**

answered question	908
skipped question	4

ResponseResponse

**6. What is the most important job motivator for you?**

	Percent	Count
Money	2.5%	23
Public recognition	1.7%	15
Benefits	5.3%	48
Positive feedback from peers	8.0%	73
Positive feedback from superiors	3.6%	33
<b>Self-satisfaction</b>	<b>78.9%</b>	<b>716</b>

**7. What is your preferred method of on the job communication?**

	answered question	910
	skipped question	2
	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
<b>Face-to-face</b>	79.7%	725
E-mail	18.0%	164
Memo	0.5%	5
Phone	1.3%	12
Social media	0.4%	4

**8. What is your preferred method of receiving job performance feedback?**

	answered question	906
	skipped question	6
	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
<b>Face-to-face</b>	89.0%	806
E-mail	3.0%	27

**8. What is your preferred method of receiving job performance feedback?**

Memo	1.5%	14
Phone	0.2%	2
Personnel evaluation	6.3%	57

**9. How often do you prefer to receive job performance feedback?**

answered question 908

skipped question 4

	Response Percent	Response Count
Often	37.3%	339
<b>Sometimes</b>	47.4%	430
Seldom	14.3%	130
Never	1.0%	9

**10. Using the generational cohort categories in question #1, do you feel that other generations (older/younger) at your work value your views, beliefs, and work ethic?**

answered question 909

skipped question 3

	Response Percent	Response Count
Always	2.2%	20
Often	32.5%	295
<b>Sometimes</b>	52.0%	473
Seldom	12.7%	115
Never	0.7%	6

**11. Using the generational cohort categories in question #1, do you value other generations (older/younger) at work views, beliefs, and work ethic?**

	answered question	904	
	skipped question	8	
		Response Percent	Response Count
Always		11.9%	108
<b>Often</b>		48.1%	435
Sometimes		35.7%	323
Seldom		4.0%	36
Never		0.2%	2

**12. Using the generational cohort categories in question #1, do you feel that you are misunderstood by other generations (older/younger) at work?**

	answered question	906	
	skipped question	6	
		Response Percent	Response Count
Always		0.8%	7
Often		12.7%	115
<b>Sometimes</b>		50.4%	457
Seldom		33.4%	303
Never		2.6%	24

**13. Using the generational cohort categories in question #1, do you feel that you understand why other generations (older/younger) at work act, and/or make decisions the way they do?**

	answered question	910	
	skipped question	2	
		Response Percent	Response Count
Always		2.5%	23
<b>Often</b>		46.5%	423
Sometimes		41.4%	377
Seldom		9.5%	86
Never		0.1%	1

**14. Do you feel dealing with other generations (older/younger) has caused conflict in the workplace?**

	answered question	908	
	skipped question	4	
		Response Percent	Response Count
Always		0.7%	6
Often		19.4%	176
<b>Sometimes</b>		51.9%	471
Seldom		24.7%	224
Never		3.4%	31



**15. Do you stay after work to complete tasks?**

	answered question	908	
	skipped question	4	
		Response Percent	Response Count
Always		14.1%	128
<b>Often</b>		42.5%	386
Sometimes		29.0%	263
Seldom		10.9%	99
Never		3.5%	32

**16. Do you cancel social/family activities to take overtime shifts?**

	answered question	895	
	skipped question	17	
		Response Percent	Response Count
Always		2.0%	18
Often		16.1%	144
<b>Sometimes</b>		36.6%	328
Seldom		27.4%	245
Never		17.9%	160

**17. Do you prefer to socialize with members of your own generation?**

	answered question	893
	skipped question	19
		ResponseResponse

**17. Do you prefer to socialize with members of your own generation?**

	Percent	Count
<b>Yes</b>	64.6%	577
No	35.4%	316

**18. Do you prefer to work on teams with members of your own generation?**

	answered question	903
	skipped question	9
	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	46.7%	422
<b>No</b>	53.3%	481

**19. Do you feel that it is difficult communicating with other generations?**

	answered question	909
	skipped question	3
	Response Percent	Response Count
Always	0.2%	2
Often	3.7%	34
<b>Sometimes</b>	50.8%	462
Seldom	37.8%	344
Never	7.4%	67

**20. Rate your preferred method of training delivery from 1-4, with 1 being your preferred and 4 your least preferred?**

					answered question	910
					skipped question	2
1	2	3	4	Rating	Response	

**20. Rate your preferred method of training delivery from 1-4, with 1 being your preferred and 4 your least preferred?**

					AverageCount	
Hands-on	85.5% (777)	7.6% (69)	3.2% (29)	3.7% (34)	1.25	909
Lecture	9.4% (85)	42.3% (384)	29.3% (266)	19.1% (173)	2.58	908
Multi-media	9.5% (86)	48.1% (436)	32.6% (296)	9.8% (89)	2.43	907
On-line	7.5% (68)	22.2% (201)	30.5% (277)	39.8% (361)	3.03	907

**21. Do you use more than two means of technology while at work (i.e. computer, smart phone, internet, on-line networking, web-based training, and social media)?**

answered question 907

skipped question 5

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
<b>Yes</b>	96.0%	871
No	4.0%	36

**22. What is your preferred workplace environment?**

answered question 908

skipped question 4

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Conservative/Clear chain of command	28.0%	254
Democratic	4.1%	37
<b>Functional/efficient</b>	40.3%	366
Collaborative/Creative	27.6%	251

**23. Do you view work as an....**

	answered question	907	
	skipped question	5	
		Response Percent	Response Count
Obligation		12.7%	115
<b>Exciting adventure</b>		72.9%	661
Difficult challenge		7.1%	64
A means to an end		7.4%	67

**24. Authority should be based on....**

	answered question	911	
	skipped question	1	
		Response Percent	Response Count
Seniority		3.3%	30
Overall experience		16.2%	148
<b>Proven merit</b>		69.7%	635
Overall contributions		10.8%	98

**25. Do you think the fire service should train more on generational diversity and the issues it may create?**

answered question	905
skipped question	7
	ResponseResponse

**25. Do you think the fire service should train more on generational diversity and the issues it may create?**

	Percent	Count
<b>Yes</b>	74.3%	672
No	25.7%	233

## Appendix D

## MFD Generational Questionnaire

This tool is being presented as part of an applied research project I am working on for the Executive Fire Officer Program. Most of you have completed an online survey for this task which captured a generic snapshot of our organizations generational characteristics. This survey will dive a little deeper into specifics of generational differences and acceptance. As before your response is completely anonymous and no names should be written on the form; I am gathering information regarding generations not people. Please complete the questions honestly and with as much detail as you would like. Once complete drop the form into inter-departmental mail (no name on the envelope), in my mailbox, or place on my desk. I would like to have the responses by July 27, 2012. If you have any questions please contact me at 385-8541. Thank you in advance for your cooperation. If you need more room please use additional sheets.

Please check your birth year range.

1922 – 1945 \_\_\_\_\_

1946 – 1964 \_\_\_\_\_

1965 – 1980 \_\_\_\_\_

1981 – 2000 \_\_\_\_\_

1. In a brief sentence please list your personal values (beliefs/Philosophy).

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2. In a brief sentence please describe your work ethic.

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3. How would you describe the values of the other MFD generations (older/younger/both)?

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4. How would you describe the work ethic of the other MFD generations (older/younger/both)?

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5. What challenges do you feel may be hindering acceptance of your generation by the others (older/younger/both)?

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6. What do you think will help other generations (older/younger/both) understand and accept your generation better?

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## Appendix E

## MFD Generational Questionnaire Results Summary

1. In a brief sentence please list your personal values (beliefs/Philosophy).

Baby Boomers – Family, friends, hard work, dedication, honesty, respect, and high morals.

Actions speak louder than words. Personal job commitment and personal integrity.

Generation X – Family, self-respect, honesty, and self-motivation. I believe in a balance between family, work, and pleasure. Working hard is the best way to be successful.

Millennials – Respect when due. Treat people how you want to be treated. Do your job well before you attempt to do someone else's or criticize them.

2. In a brief sentence please describe your work ethic.

Baby Boomers – I am extremely lucky and fortunate to get paid to do what I love to do. The job is not that difficult. Know your job, do it well, and then bitch later. Be the professional you were hired to be.

Generation X – Nothing is entitled to me, I have to prove my worth. You must earn your position and reputation. What you put in is what you get out. Do more than is asked of you and don't stop until the job is done. Goal oriented, collaborative and results oriented.

Millennials – I am paid well and strive to earn every dollar by staying busy and training. I come to work with a smile and leave with one. Just get the job done, don't be the first one to sit down. Do not take work lightly and do not make others suffer for your lack of motivation.



3. How would you describe the values of the other MFD generations (older/younger/both)?

Baby Boomers – Both generations want to be professional and make a difference serving the community. Both take pride in being firefighters. Older generation understands they are not the center of the universe. The needs of many outweigh the needs of the individual. Older generation appreciates traditions, hard work, and efforts of previous firefighters. Younger generation values themselves first and foremost.

Generation X – Older generations value family and work, younger values money, status, and material possessions. Older generation is more team-oriented while younger is self-centered. Older focuses more on respect while younger seems to act more entitled. Appreciate the older members who still give effort and the younger members who recognize how privileged they are. Younger are spoiled and never had to work a hard day in their life, always think things are owed to them.

Millennials – Our younger members tend to be more self-centered and often have a sense of entitlement. Older members appreciate their job; younger thinks they should be paid more and that their benefits suck. 20% of older generation are respectful and set reasonable goals, 80% are self-entitled bigots. It is time for older members at work for money and benefits to leave. 80% of younger members are self-entitled and self-serving, only coming to work to hide and expect to rise through the ranks for nothing. The other 20% are highly motivated self-starters not used to people slowing their careers down.

4. How would you describe the work ethic of the other MFD generations (older/younger/both)?

Baby Boomers – Both are skilled and well trained to respond to emergencies. All have unique skills, abilities, and experience that combine to create a synergistic effect.

Older tend to know their professional limitations while younger generations overestimate their abilities. Older members want to know what needs to be done and by when, younger wants to know why they have to do it. Younger want rewards now as opposed to working for them, commitment seems to secondary.

Generation X – Older generations work ethic is strong; however, they follow orders without ask why sometimes. Younger generation is lazy period and asks why too much, have horrible work ethic and want everything the easy way. It seems that the last generation to retire had the strongest work ethic. Older has good work ethic but sometimes stuck in the past, do not like doing things a new way.

Millennials – Dependent on the individual. Older tends to work for rewards while younger tend to work only after given rewards. Older members grateful to have job, younger expect to have job because of higher education. Older generation works until work is done, younger makes more work trying to get out of work. Both generations do not want to work harder due to fact that outcome is the same, satisfactory evaluations.

5. What challenges do you feel may be hindering acceptance of your generation by the others (older/younger/both)?

Baby Boomers – First and foremost younger generation do not care nor do they have a desire to try and understand older generations. Older members are merely tolerated due

to rank and seniority. Younger generation considers it their right to move to the front of the line and be given something just because they showed up for work.

Younger generation severely outpaces the older when it comes to technology.

Generation X – Older generation is stuck in their ways and reluctant of trying new ways. We will eventually have to conform to the Millennials way just by being outnumbered by them in the future. Different sets of values and experiences in life, not wrong or right just different. Lack of understanding of why we are the way we are. Not sure, I don't think I fit in my generation.

Millennials – Lack of respect is a huge obstacle. Attitudes are challenging. Realize people can have a difference of opinions. Talk to supervisors about career goals and make it clear about your expectations from the department.

6. What do you think will help other generations (older/younger/both) understand and accept your generation better?

Baby Boomers – A genuine heartfelt concern for others coupled with a desire to understand others. Interpersonal skills and education in regards to generational characteristics. Some of the old ways are tried and true.

Generation X – Being given the opportunity to lead by example is best way to prove your way is just as productive as theirs. Education on why each generation is different and come to mutual understanding and expectations. Being able to recognize the good traits in others even if they are different than yours. Time and accountability.

Millennials – I am not certain any generation is not accepted. I can't say, it usually takes change on all parties' behalf. Life is not easy slow down and enjoy it. Times have changed, this isn't 1976 and it is not 2006. Treat others and yourself better.